

THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF WUNDT'S FOLK-PSYCHOLOGY

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Wundt's folk-psychology constitutes an integral part of his philosophical system. In some respects it must be regarded as the crowning achievement of his thought, inasmuch as its theoretical foundations presuppose all of his former work. In order to gain a proper setting for our critical considerations, we must begin with a somewhat detailed discussion of certain general concepts employed in Wundt's philosophy. Without a clear comprehension of these a criticism of his folk-psychology would not be feasible.

I. WUNDT'S CONCEPT OF CREATIVE SYNTHESIS

The term 'voluntaristic' characterizes Wundt's psychology—in contradistinction to that of other schools, such as the Associationist, Herbartian, and others—as viewing all psychic phenomena as the expressions of the will, but of the will in the broadest possible sense of the term. To Wundt the will is not a metaphysical concept, as it is to Schopenhauer. It is rather a principle that states the fundamental nature of all psychic life, from the simplest to the most complex processes. It gives expression, in the form of a principle, to the empirical facts about the mind—the psychological facts as they are borne out by an analysis of psychic experience and by an interpretation of psychological experiments.

Wundt regards the sensations (*Empfindungen*) and the feelings (*Gefühle*) as the two ultimate and irreducible elements of psychic life. They do not occur as concrete realities, being the abstract products of logical analysis. In the world of reality we only experience complex psychic phenomena compounded of those elements. The psychic elements are only real in the sense that they are constant components of all

psychic experience. But no psychic phenomenon is merely the sum of the component sensational and emotional elements. Invariably it is something new over and above the sum of the parts that enter into the compound. Thus all temporal and spacial ideas, for instance, are not equal to the sums of the separate sensations and feelings that constitute their elements. A chord is not equal to the sum of all its component tones: it is rather, on its psychological side, a new and unique experience. All psychic phenomena are therefore creative products of synthesis: they are, when seen from this point of view, acts of *will*. This justifies the term 'voluntaristic' as referring to that fundamental trait of the mind by which all psychic processes are creative. As we see, Wundt extends the concept of creative synthesis from the highest forms of apperceptive processes—which we witness in intellectual and artistic pursuits, where the creativeness is so obvious—to the entire realm of psychic life.

The principle of creative synthesis, as the one cardinal principle of psychic life, embraces the three principles of psychic causality which Wundt cites; namely, the principle of psychic 'resultants,' the principle of psychic relations, and the principle of psychical contrasts.¹ They pertain to the same content viewed from different angles.²

A word must here be said about the counterpart of the principle of creative synthesis; namely, that of the heterogeny of ends (*Heterogonie der Zwecke*). According to Wundt, every causal relation when reversed becomes a teleological one, inasmuch as the two principles of cognition, causality and teleology, do not exclude each other, but are complementary modes of bringing phenomena into logical relation. Thus the principle of creative synthesis, as a causal principle, can be reversed into a teleological one; namely, that of the heterogeny of ends. It applies to the same facts of psychic life as the former, but from a different point of view. What is cause and effect in one case is means and end in the other. "Es [handelt] sich eben bei dem Prinzip der Heterogonie um kein

¹ 'Outlines of Psychology,' 2d Engl. ed., 364 et seq.; 'Physiologische Psychologie' (5th ed.), 3, 778 et seq.

² 'Physiol. Psychol.,' 3, 787.

neues Prinzip, sondern nur um eine durch die besonderen Bedingungen nahegelegte teleologische Umformung der causalen Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens. . . ."¹ It is important to emphasize this relation of the two principles, in order to understand the significance which Wundt attributes to the heterogeny of ends in the psychic development of the individuals as well as of the group. It must also be stated in this connection that as an interpretative principle of cultural phenomena not the causal principle but rather the teleological one (the heterogeny of ends) is of paramount importance. This is the case because the psychic phenomena in cultural development, on account of their complexity on the one hand and the discrepancy of their causes and effects on the other, are not interpretable progressively from the causes to the effects, but rather regressively from the given ends backwards to the motives. Theoretically the heterogeny of ends is a principle of universal validity. Wundt elaborates its application especially in connection with the interpretation of the development of ethical ideas out of non-ethical or rather pre-ethical ones.

In keeping with the nature of psychic causality, according to which an effect is not equal to its cause, the heterogeny of ends implies that in psychic development the ends attained are not equivalent to the purposes embodied in the motives. Between the motives and their ends there arise as unintended by-products secondary 'resultants' not implied in the motives, and thus is brought about a constant discrepancy of motives and ends. In a chain of motives and ends these unintended resultants, as well as the purposed end, take the form of new motives. Thus a constant shifting of the purposes takes place, which leads Wundt to speak of a heterogeny of ends.

II. THE CONCEPT OF PSYCHIC ACTUALITY

The concept of creative synthesis is supplemented by that of psychic actuality. This concept expresses the fundamental characteristic of Wundt's conception of psychic life, and distinguishes his psychology from those other forms that conceive

¹ 'Physiol. Psychol.,' (5th ed.), 3, 789-790.

the psyche as a substance analogous to that of the physical world. According to Wundt the phenomena of psychology are *toto coelo* different from those of the natural sciences in their relation to the investigating subject. It is of the very nature of the natural sciences that their objects be thought to exist in an objective world distinct from the subject. They exist as if there were no subject. This conception of the purely objective world of natural phenomena becomes possible through an abstraction from the observing and correlating subject. This abstraction involves the postulation of a physical substratum to which all natural phenomena must be referred as to the underlying principle. The hypothetical substratum thus postulated takes the form either of matter or of energy. In this way the natural sciences view their phenomena through the medium of an auxiliary concept; namely, that of the substantiality of their objects. Over and against this, psychology does not approach its objects by way of an abstraction from the subject. It views them 'immediately' (*unmittelbar*), since they are given in the consciousness of the subject itself. Those psychologists who postulate a soul-substance ignore the intrinsic nature of the objects of their investigation, and have fallen into the pitfall of an untrue analogy of the psychical with the physical world. In contradistinction to physical substantiality, Wundt characterizes the subject-matter of psychology as the actuality of psychic life. This actuality defines 'the nature of mind as the immediate reality of the processes themselves.'¹

The distinction between physical substantiality and psychical actuality determines likewise that between physical and psychical causality. The terms of the one form of causality are quantitative, those of the other are qualitative.² Physical causality is characterized by the quantitative equivalence of cause and effect—a fact which finds its expression in the principle of the preservation of energy. Psychical causality, as implied in the concept of the creative synthesis, involves qualitative disparity of cause and effect. "Es gibt absolut

¹ 'Outlines,' 357.

² Wundt, 'Logik' (3d ed.), 3, 276.

kein solches [i. e., psychologisches] Gebilde, das nicht nach der Bedeutung und dem Wert seines Inhaltes mehr wäre als die blosse Summe seiner Faktoren oder die blosse mechanische Resultante seiner Komponenten."¹ By juxtaposing the constant values of physical energy to the creative synthesis of psychic energy, Wundt gains specific psychological connotations for his concept of evolution.

III. THE BEARING OF CREATIVE SYNTHESIS ON THE CONCEPT OF FOLK-SOUL

Wundt identifies the growth of psychic life with the increase of qualitative 'Wertgrössen,' which concept he contrasts with that of the quantitative 'Grössenwerte' of the physical world.² This clever play of words contains *in nuce* the essence of Wundt's philosophy. The concept 'Wertgrössen' implies the teleological factor which Wundt introduces into his conception of psychic evolution. The idea of purpose (*Zweck*) is an integral part of Wundt's concept of voluntaristic psychology. The intrinsic nature of man is his psychic life. But, as we have seen, all psychic processes are voluntaristic, are products of a creative synthesis—are acts of will, if you like. These processes are therefore, by their very definition, purposive. Thus the consistent conclusion is that the existence of man finds its purpose in the creation of psychic life;³ but this purpose of existence is not limited to the life of man. The individual human being is but a link in the chain of psychic evolution. Life in the entirety of its expressions is the self-manifestation and self-evolution of the psychic. Nature as the physical prerequisite of the psychic is the 'Vorstufe des Geistes'; and, inversely, the psychic is the 'vorauszusetzender Zweck des organischen Lebens.'⁴

The principle of creative synthesis defines the nature of this psychogenesis in terms of psychic causality. This principle, which, as we have seen, characterizes all our psychic processes as creative productions over and above their con-

¹ 'Logik,' 3, 274.

² *Ibid.*, 276.

³ Wundt, 'System der Philosophie' (3d ed.), 2, 238-239.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

stituent parts, characterizes them, in short, as 'voluntaristic,' applies to all psychic life in general, from its lowest to its highest forms. From this point of view Wundt's position in the discussion of the relation of reflexes to volitions obtains its deeper significance. Volitions are not differentiated mechanical reflexes, but rather reflexes are mechanized volitions. Thus in the successive stages of evolution the volitions lay claim to priority. Wundt demonstrates this by the fact that, even in the very lowest forms of life, reactions are not mechanical but purposive, and thus characterized in the same way as our own psyche.

Wundt's theory of psychogenesis gains its immediate significance for the concept of folk-psychology through the fact that the universality of creative synthesis obtains not only for the continuous succession of steps which lead from our psyche down to inorganic nature, but also for that whole sphere of psychic life which, as Wundt assumes, leads beyond the individual psyche into the realm of the over-individual life of the community (*der Gemeinschaft*). The creative synthesis which characterizes the intrinsic nature of all psychic compounds, and of all interconnections of these compounds in the psyche of the individual, is found repeated, according to Wundt, in a strictly analogous way, but on a higher level of evolution in the psychic life of the community or the folk. The reality of the folk-soul is involved in the extension of this principle beyond the individual psyche. As the psyche of the individual is built up in the form of a progression of superimposed syntheses, so the folk-soul is a synthesis of syntheses: it is something creatively new, not equal to the sum of its elements, that is to say of the individuals of which it is composed.¹ Wundt expresses this idea clearly in the following sentence: "Aber wie nicht psychische Elemente in isoliertem Zustande, sondern ihre Verbindungen und die aus diesen entspringenden Produkte das bilden, was wir eine Einzelseele nennen, so besteht die Volksseele im empirischen Sinne nicht aus einer blossen Summe individueller Bewusstseinsseinheiten, deren

¹ 'Darum ist das gemeinsame Leben niemals eine blosse Addition individueller Wirkungen,' *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1891, 200.

Kreise sich mit einem Teil ihres Umfangs decken; sondern auch bei ihr resultieren aus dieser Verbindung eigentümliche psychische und psychophysische Vorgänge, die in dem Einzelbewusstsein allein entweder gar nicht oder mindestens nicht in der Ausbildung entstehen könnten, in der sie sich in Folge der Wechselwirkung der Einzelnen entwickeln."¹

IV. THE FOLK-SOUL

Wundt maintains that the folk-soul is no less real than the soul of the individual. In order to understand the line of thought that leads up to this assertion, it is necessary to recall what has been said about his conception of psychic actuality. The concept 'soul,' as used by Wundt, does not refer to a substance, be it materialistic or spiritualistic, but rather to the immediateness, the actuality, of psychic experience. Thus the soul of the individual, being deprived of the connotation of a substantialistic substratum, is an abstract term for an entity of concrete psychic experiences. "Unter der individuellen Seele verstehen wir die unmittelbare Einheit der Zustände eines Einzelbewusstseins."² This same conception of 'soul' as psychic actuality leads Wundt to postulate the reality of the folk-soul. As we have seen, he defines the folk-psychological phenomena as a sphere of psychical facts, which, while claiming the individual souls as their constituent elements, represent a new and peculiar creative synthesis distinct from the component parts. The concept 'folk-soul' refers in exactly the same way to the entity of these over-individual psychic facts as the individual soul refers to that of the psychic experiences of the individual. The essential connotation of the folk-soul, like that of the individual soul, is that it is an actuality, not a substance. Now the psychic facts of the over-individual group, as empirical facts, are according to Wundt as real as the psychic life of the individual. Therefore, so argues Wundt, the term 'soul' is equally justifiable and equally applicable in the case of folk-psychological phenomena as it is

¹ 'Völkerpsychologie' (1st ed.), I, 1, 9-10; see also 'Probleme der Völkerpsychologie,' 1911, p. 13.

² 'System d. Rhil.,' 2, 148.

in that of individual psychology.¹ The axiom of voluntaristic psychology is, 'So viel Aktualität so viel Realität.'² Therefore the folk-soul, as an actuality, is a reality.

A psychology, says Wundt, that abides by the conception of a soul-substance, can never comprehend the reality of the folk-soul, because a soul-substance is necessarily bound to the physical entity of the individual. "Ist die Seele ein beharrendes Wesen, wie die Substanzhypothese annimmt, ein geistiges Atom . . . , so hat selbstverständlich nur das Individuum wahre Realität."³ To those who state that the folk-soul is a fiction and a production of the mythological imagination, Wundt replies that the conception of the soul as a substance is mythological rather than that of the actuality of the folk-soul, and hence of its reality.⁴ The idea of a soul-substance, says Wundt, is a survival of mythical animism.

This is the line of thought that induces Wundt to postulate folk-psychology as an independent science, with its own particular realm of problems. Its existence is as justified as that of individual psychology. Wundt defines it as the study of the folk-soul ('die Lehre von der Volksseele').

Wundt's plea for folk-psychology is apparently founded on a rigid construction of logical thought. The well-balanced succession of premises and conclusions offers a good example of Wundt's argumentative brilliancy. The line of thought is enticing; and still the one decisive point in his argument for the reality of the folk-soul is gained by a subtle *coup d'état*.

The *raison d'être* of folk-psychology is at the mercy of the thesis of the reality of the folk-soul. This reality, as we have seen, is based on the idea of psychical actuality—a concept taken from the psychology of the individual. In individual psychology the concept 'actuality' acquires its meaning through the fact that the phenomena at hand are *immediately*⁵ perceived in contradistinction to the mediate cognition of

¹ 'Probl. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 1911, 13, 20.

² 'Logik,' 3, 293-294.

³ 'Logik,' 3, 293; 'Syst. d. Phil.,' 2, 188.

⁴ 'Völkerpsychol.,' 1, 1, 8-9.

⁵ I use the terms 'mediate' and 'immediate' for Wundt's terms 'mittelbar' and 'unmittelbar.' 'Indirect' and 'direct' would only convey the meaning approximately.

the natural sciences, which must postulate a substance as the extra-subjective substratum of their phenomena. The immediateness of experience is the fundamental connotation of psychic actuality. The condition in question is fulfilled in the case of individual psychology by the intrinsic and irreducible nature of consciousness. But what about the folk-soul? The folk-soul is by definition an over-individual synthesis. The psychic phenomena of the folk-soul are by definition not contained in the psyche of the individuals as such; but immediate psychic experience is—again by definition—confined to the consciousness of the individual. How then can there be an *immediate* experience of an over-individual synthesis? And what sort of a meaningless thing is an over-individual actuality of psychic life? But if there is no over-individual actuality, then there can be no folk-soul. The one falls with the other. The *contradictio in adjecto* which we here encounter in Wundt's argument lies in the following premises: psychic actuality is the immediateness of experience; the folk-soul is an over-individual synthesis. Wundt bridges the gap by ignoring at the decisive point in his argument the 'immediateness' of psychical actuality.

V. THE RELATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE GROUP

Having discussed in abstract terms the flaw in Wundt's plea for folk-psychology by pointing out his self-contradictory usage of concepts, let us investigate for a moment somewhat more concretely the same break in argumentation from another point of view; namely, from that of the relation of the individual to the group.

Wundt states categorically that folk-psychology deals with the psychology of language, religion (*Mythus und Religion*), and custom. These three types of cultural phenomena are the achievements *par excellence* of the folk-mind (*Volksgeist*). Not the individuals, but the group (*die Gemeinschaft*), is the creator of language, religion, custom. Of course, the group consists physically of a number of individuals; but those folk-psychological phenomena, so argues Wundt, represent a higher syn-

thesis that transcends the scope of individual consciousness.¹ He says, "Sie [i. e., die Erlebnisse und Erzeugnisse geistiger Gemeinschaften] unterscheiden sich dadurch von den Synthesen des individuellen Bewusstseins, dass sie sich aus Bestandteilen *eines* Bewusstseins niemals erklären lassen, sondern auf einer geistigen Wechselwirkung vieler beruhen, die sich zu den genannten Vorgängen ähnlich verhalten, wie die Vorstellungs- und Willenselemente des Einzelbewusstseins zu den zusammengesetzten Vorstellungen und Willenshandlungen des einzelnen."² Mised by the analogy between the synthesis of psychical elements in the individual and the synthesis of the individuals in the group, Wundt becomes entangled in the illusory problem of the relation of the individual to the group.

This problem is no less an illusion than the old one of the relation of the particular to the universal, of which indeed it is but a specific application. The illusory nature lies in the fact that, when speaking of the particular and the universal, we are not operating with concepts of different objects, but rather with different conceptual abstractions of the same object. The individuals are the group, and the group is the individuals. The two terms represent different modes of conceptualizing the same thing. Wundt puts the problem thus: Is the individual as such, or is the group as such, the creator of language, religion, and custom? He states correctly, in opposition to the intellectualistic school of psychology, that it is not the individual as such; but at once he falls into the opposite error, and asserts that the group as such, the over-individual synthesis, is the creator of cultural phenomena. Wundt's position is no more consistent than is that of his adversaries. Logically a collective term is an abstraction from its analytic components, and the latter again are an abstraction from the former. Correspondingly, in our case the group is an abstraction from the individuals, and the individuals are an abstraction from the group. Thus Wundt's juxtaposition of the individuals as such, and the group as the over-individual synthesis, is an absurdity. A result of the contradictions in which Wundt becomes en-

¹ 'Probl. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 24.

² 'Logik,' 3, 295.

tangled is the vagueness with which he continually treats the relation of the individual to the group as soon as he attempts to demonstrate this relation concretely.¹

The error in Wundt's position is determined from the outset by the way in which he formulates his problem: Is the individual as such, or is the group as such, the creator of language, religion, and custom? The difficulty thus involved arises from a confusion of the two distinct points of view from which the individual can be conceived. From the one point of view the individual is the subjective entity as experienced "immediately" (*unmittelbar*) in consciousness. This subjective individual experiences himself as autonomous. It is the individual of psychical actuality and of indeterminism. From the other point of view the individual is society and he is history. He is determined psychically by his cultural milieu. He is the individual of determinism, and the object of culture-history. We avoid the problem of determinism versus indeterminism, and we do not, as Wundt does, entangle ourselves in its meshes, if we distinguish clearly between these two points of view. Wundt gains the concept of the group as an over-individual synthesis by viewing the individual only from the first point of view; namely, as an autonomous monad.² Of course the individual as such cannot be brought into *rapprochement* with culture-historical problems when approached from this standpoint. Since language, religion, and custom are by definition psychical and historical phenomena—in short, cultural phenomena—the only point of view from which their study is conceivable is that of culture-history. But from this point of view, the individual, as we have seen, is history, he is society; he is, in brief, the *ζῶν πολιτικόν*.

To conceive the individual historically—and by this I mean at the same time socially and culturally—as an autonomous entity is as meaningless as to study the course of a river independent of the geology of its bed. The *ζῶν πολιτικόν* has *sui generis* a psycho-historical setting, it has a culture. And this culture is nothing accessory, it is not cast in the

¹ See, for instance, Wundt, *Menschen- und Tierseele* (4th ed.), 509.

² *Syst. d. Phil.*, 2, p. 204.

mould of an autonomous individual; but language, religion, custom *are* from the historical point of view the individual, they *are* the group, they *are* the ζῶν πολιτικόν.

The result to which Wundt's distinction between the individual soul and the folk-soul leads is nicely borne out by the following analogy, to which he repeatedly calls attention in his different works. In his individual psychology, Wundt designates the ideas and the emotions as the analytic components of the psyche, and defines the third class of psychic phenomena, the volitions, as a synthesis of the former two. Since ideas, emotions, and volitions thus make up the individual soul, Wundt, consistent with his idea of higher syntheses, is induced to find the corresponding division in the folk-soul. He actually goes so far as to correlate language, religion (*Mythus und Religion*), and custom—the elements of the folk-soul—with the ideas, emotions, and volitions, respectively, of the individual soul. “Die Sprache enthält die allgemeine Form der in dem Volkseiste lebenden Vorstellungen und die Gesetze ihrer Verknüpfung. Der Mythus birgt den ursprünglichen Inhalt dieser Vorstellungen in seiner Bedingtheit durch Gefühle und Triebe. Die Sitte endlich schliesst die aus diesen Vorstellungen und Trieben entsprungenen allgemeinen Willensrichtungen in sich. . . . So wiederholen sich in Sprache, Mythus und Sitte gleichsam auf einer höheren Stufe die Elemente, aus denen sich der Tatbestand des individuellen Bewusstseins zusammensetzt.”¹ The superficiality of this analogy is manifested by the altogether arbitrary selection of the attributes of language, religion, and custom. I can conceive of no reason why mythology and religion, for instance, should not be correlated just as well with the ideas or the volitions as with the emotions. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that Wundt's tripartite division of culture into language, religion, and custom—a division which is of course convenient for the above analogy—is in itself altogether arbitrary. Why social organization and technology, for example, should not find coördinated divisions is incomprehensible. The correctness of

¹ ‘Probl. d. Völkerpsychol.,’ 29–30; see also ‘Logik,’ 3, 232; ‘Völkerpsychol.,’ I, 1, 26, 27.

this statement is, indeed, demonstrated by the fact that in his latest work on folk-psychology, in his 'Elemente,' Wundt himself ignores the tripartite division in favor of a consideration of all categories of cultural phenomena. The above analogy between the elements of the individual soul and those of the so-called 'folk-soul' is no less crude than the analogy sometimes drawn between the state and a physiological organism on the basis of certain superficial similarities.

VI. THE PSYCHOGENESIS OF THE FOLK-SOUL

In his folk-psychological terminology, Wundt introduces the concept 'social will' (*Gesamtwille*), which, analogous to the concepts 'folk-soul' and 'social mind' (*Gesamtgeist*), corresponds on the social side to the will of the individual. To be sure, the distinction which Wundt makes between the concepts 'folk-soul,' 'social mind,' and 'social will' is frequently far from being clear. He is inclined to use especially the term '*Gesamtwille*' in a way that demonstrates clearly to my mind the line of thought that leads him to the idea of social life as an over-individual synthesis. My point is—and it is probably profitable to state it at this point—that Wundt derives the idea of the folk-soul from the collective actions of the group as an *organized* social entity. At times one even gets the impression that it may be derived in a superficial way from the legally organized state of the present day. For instance, while trying to demonstrate that the reality of the group is of a higher order than that of the individual, Wundt states: "Der praktisch bedeutsamste Beweis scheint mir freilich darin zu liegen, dass die Normen des Rechts nur aus einem realen Gesamtwillen jene verpflichtende Kraft schöpfen können, vermöge deren sie ihre unbedingte Herrschaft über den Einzelwillen behaupten."¹

It is significant that Wundt cites criminal law as a specific example. A similar specification of the social will in terms of organized society is expressed in the following passage: "Nun findet sich der Wille des Einzelnen eingeschlossen in einer

¹ Wundt, 'Ueber das Verhältnis des Einzelnen zur Gemeinschaft,' *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1891, 203.

Willensgemeinschaft, die mit ihm in fortwährender Wechselwirkung steht, so dass er, vom Gesamtwillen beeinflusst, selber wieder nach Massgabe der erreichten individuellen Entwicklung diesen bestimmt. So ist der Einzelne zunächst Mitglied eines Stammes, einer Familie, einer Berufsgenossenschaft, dann bei sich erweiternder Willensentfaltung Glied einer Nation, eines Staates, um schliesslich mit diesen höheren Willenseinheiten teilzunehmen an einer . . . Willensgemeinschaft der Kulturvölker."¹ Bearing this rendering of the social will in mind, and recalling that language, religion, and custom are, according to Wundt, the creations *par excellence* of the folk-soul, it is fair to infer that these cultural achievements are conceived by Wundt as created by the group as an *organized* social unit. That this is his meaning, is implied in the following statement:

"In der Tat bilden ja Rechtsordnung und Staat nur hoch entwickelte Formen eines gemeinsamen Lebens, das von frühe an in der eine Volks- oder Stammesgemeinschaft verbindenden Sprache, in den ihr eigentümlichen religiösen und mythologischen Anschauungen, endlich in den für alle verbindlichen Normen der Sitte sich äussert."²

While from an *a priori* point of view it may seem plausible enough that language, religion, and custom are the evolutionary products of the social group as such, it is easy for modern anthropology to point out that the homogeneity and continuity of development as implied in the psychogenesis of the organized group are not borne out by empirical data. We do not find types of language, of religion, of mythology, of custom grouped in such a way as to justify us in viewing cultural evolution as a single line of development. For instance, we find the Athapascan-speaking Navaho in absolute social isolation from the remote northern Athapascans, and with a culture characteristic of the southwestern area. Again, we find the Tewa-

¹ 'Syst. d. Phil.,' I, 389. It is interesting to note that in a chapter of his 'System der Philosophie' (2, 188-211) devoted to the evolution of the social mind ('Entwicklungsformen des Gesamtgeistes') Wundt treats exclusively of the forms of social organization beginning with the tribe and leading up to the modern state. Here he ignores all other possibilities of a broader aspect of cultural development, in spite of the fact that the 'Gesamtgeist,' by way of definition, pertains to the psychogenesis of culture at large.

² Wundt, in *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1891, 198.

speaking inhabitants of Hano living in the closest social and cultural relations with the Hopi, in spite of the difference of tongue. The Plains area shows a great diversity of speech associated with a great similarity of other cultural factors, especially of material culture. Anthropology furnishes numerous instances of the constant dissociation in the distribution of cultural elements.

Wundt's folk-psychology pretends to be based on empirical facts; but is it not rather an unhistorical construction, inspired by the *a priori* idea of the manifestation of the folk-soul in the organized social group? When I protest against the identification of the folk-soul with the organized group I do not mean to question, of course, the social factor in cultural development. That would be an absurdity. The point lies in another direction. The question is whether we can conceive the development of culture, language, religion, and custom in the form of a single line of psychogenesis, as implied in Wundt's idea of the 'Gesamtwille' and of the constructive development of the social group.

I emphasize the 'single line' of development, because Wundt's psychogenesis¹ represents psychic evolution as a *typical* and universally valid succession of developmental stages. He thus intentionally abstracts from the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the lines of development as they are presented to us empirically in the history of culture. Wundt's idea of psychogenesis is determined by his postulate of the purely psychological, non-historical nature of all folk-psychological problems. The fundamental question is whether such an abstraction from all concrete historical data is methodologically permissible. Quite apart from other theoretical considerations Wundt's method is condemned, in the eyes of the anthropologist, by the fact that, while positing the psychology of cultural development as the particular object of folk-psychology, it ignores completely an account of the inherent schematism of its unilinear construction, the two fundamental psychological problems of cultural development; namely, that of culture areas, and that of cultural diffusion. These two

¹ 'Elem. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 4.

complementary psychological problems transcend the realm of the unilinear psychogenesis of the organized group as such, and thus find no place within the dogmatically limited sphere of Wundt's would-be social will (*Gesamtwille*). What is the psychological significance of cultural specialization within certain geographical areas—a specialization quite distinct from the distribution of language, and in no way limited to social units? What is the psychological interpretation of the relation of cultural centers—those focal points that appear like the crests of waves—to the outlying fringes of the areas? What are the psychological situations that quicken the diffusion of borrowed cultural elements? What are those that retard or exclude the diffusion? What are the factors that determine on the one hand the passive absorption, on the other the active assimilation of borrowed traits? These are all real psychological problems. They apply specifically to those cultural phenomena which Wundt's folk-psychology seeks to comprehend—to such phenomena, for instance, as sound-shifts, the psychical transformation of religious ideas, and the heterogeny of custom. But Wundt's folk-psychology ignores such problems in favor of a construction which, while ingenious, blinds us by its very nature to the real psychological problems as presented by the empirical facts.

I have tried to demonstrate that Wundt derives his concept of the social will from the group as an organized social entity with collective modes of action. This derivation is characteristic of Wundt's attempt to arrive, through a process of conceptualization, at a purely psychological construct, to be operated with in a would-be science of over-individual syntheses. This construct is the folk-soul. Inasmuch as the problems of folk-psychology are to be purely psychological, the folk-soul must be conceived as a psychological actuality *abstracted* from the concrete historical phenomena. But where is this purely psychological something demonstrable, since all cultural developments are given as concrete historical phenomena? It is not difficult to understand why Wundt, in this dilemma, seizes upon the collective actions of the organized group as a tangible realization of the social will, and thus, in

his terminology, of the folk-soul. But one dilemma is not annulled by the addition of a new one. The construction of a typical and unilinear psychogenesis of language, religion, and custom is contradicted, as we have seen, by the culture-historical phenomena themselves, from which the folk-psychological construction is supposed to abstract. The net of contradictions in which Wundt thus becomes involved is caused, as will be shown, by his *a priori* assumption that in the study of cultural phenomena a separation of the psychological from the historical point of view is methodologically feasible.

VII. THE "TYPICAL" NATURE OF FOLK-PSYCHOLOGICAL INDUCTIONS

Before entering on the discussion of this final point of our criticism, it is necessary to dwell for a moment on Wundt's proposition that the inductions of folk-psychology are of 'typical' significance. This is a fundamental point for Wundt, inasmuch as it is a direct expression of the 'purely psychological' bearing of folk-psychology, and thus implies his idea of the absolute distinction between psychology on the one hand, and history on the other. According to Wundt, the phenomena of psychology are 'typical'; those of history, 'singular' (*singulär*).² Individual psychology deals with the psychical processes of individual consciousness, in so far as they are 'typical.'³ The processes of folk-psychology as an essential branch of general psychology are characterized in the same way. "Gegenstand einer psychologischen Disziplin kann . . . überall nur das Allgemeingültige, Typische sein. . . ."⁴ The concept of the 'typical' in folk-psychology is derived from the corresponding concept in individual psychology by means of Wundt's general analogy of the individual soul as the

¹ I use the term 'typical' to convey the meaning of Wundt's terms 'typisch' and 'allgemeingültig.'

² I would call attention to the specific sense in which I use the term 'singular' in order to make it correspond to Wundt's 'singulär.' It is the contrasting term of 'typical.'

³ 'Logik,' 3, 162.

⁴ 'Logik,' 3, 230.

microcosmos, and of the folk-soul as the macrocosmos. This analogy, with its derivative concepts, appears plausible enough as long as it remains in an ethereal sphere of abstractness. As soon as such ideas are elaborated for specific application, they become self-contradictory. That this is precisely what happens to the concept 'typical,' I shall attempt to demonstrate presently by means of certain inconsistencies in Wundt's considerations.

The subject-matter of folk-psychology, language, religion, and custom, is originally given in the form of 'singular' phenomena, and is thus subject priorily to a purely historical consideration. From these 'singular' data of history, however, the 'typical' material of folk-psychology is gained by means of analysis and comparison. The 'typical' something that is thus supposedly found is referred to by Wundt as the 'common attributes of the folk-mind' (*allgemeine Eigenschaften des Volksgeistes*).¹ Then, again, he speaks of the products of the refining-process as the 'universal laws of psychical evolution' (*universelle geistige Entwicklungsgesetze*).² In another connection, however, Wundt explicitly states that the general psychical laws that are borne out by folk-psychology are necessarily already completely contained in individual psychology. He says: "Darum ist es von vornherein ausgeschlossen, dass in der Völkerpsychologie irgendwelche allgemeine Gesetze des geistigen Geschehens zum Vorschein kommen, die nicht in den Gesetzen des individuellen Bewusstseins bereits vollständig erhalten sind."³ By combining these two propositions of Wundt we arrive at the conclusion that the laws of folk-psychology, which are supposed to characterize the attributes of the folk-soul, are not at all characteristic of the folk-soul, inasmuch as they are but applications of individual psychology. The contradiction thus incurred demonstrates the meaninglessness, on the one hand, of the term 'typical' in folk-psychology and, on the other, of the juxtaposition of the individual-soul and the folk-soul.

¹ 'Probl. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 28.

² 'Probl. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 24; see also 'Logik,' 3, 240.

³ 'Logik,' 3, 227.

There is another point of view from which the "typical" nature of Wundt's folk-psychology can be criticised. As we have seen, its 'typical' significance implies theoretically that the subject-matter of folk-psychology is 'purely psychological'; that is to say, non-historical. In order to ascertain what this 'typical,' non-historical something is, we naturally turn to Wundt's work on folk-psychology itself. What we find here differs strikingly from what the theoretical foundations have led us to anticipate. The three spheres of folk-psychological investigation are, according to Wundt, the purely psychological problems of language, religion, and custom.¹ Those of language and religion are dealt with in his large work on the subject; those of custom, in a part of his 'Ethik.' A glance at the contents suffices to show that in reality Wundt's folk-psychology, far from dealing with 'purely psychological' problems, consists of psychological interpretations of a hypothetical *historical* construction. The content is certainly not non-historical: it differs only from the usual conception of history, in that Wundt has replaced the empirical account of historical developments by an historical construction which he regards hypothetically as the general course of the development of all language, religion, and custom. The 'purely psychological' of Wundt's theoretical postulates reduces and transforms itself in the actualized product into a 'generalized historical.' Thus the unscientific character of the 'typical' attributes of the folk-soul is proved by the very process of their elaboration.

The point just made is borne out still more clearly in the case of Wundt's latest work on folk-psychology, his 'Elemente der Völkerpsychologie.' Here we have before us a constructive history of human culture embracing the past, present, and the future—a brilliantly worked out scheme of the development of mankind through a number of successive cultural stages. This historical framework is constructed mosaic-fashion by fitting the traits of different cultures together, and by letting the presumably higher forms succeed the presumably lower ones. The selection of traits necessary

¹ 'Völkerpsychol.' (1st ed.), I, I, 24.

for building up in this way a ladder of evolutionary stages characterizes the ensuing edifice as purely hypothetical. What objective criteria, indeed, have we for determining one culture as 'higher' than another—for placing the Australian totemism, for instance, on a higher level than the types of 'primitive man' which Wundt adduces? From the empirical point of view, cultures are not differentiated quantitatively by varying degrees of development, but rather by the qualitative heterogeneity of their psychic specialization. The idea of 'degrees' of evolution can only be determined by an extraneous code of evaluation. In Wundt's case this code is clearly supplied by his purely ethical norm of the development towards a humanitarian ideal ('Entwicklung zur Humanität'), as elaborated in his 'Ethik.' In his 'Elemente,' this normative conception is, as already discernible from the table of contents, responsible for the arrangement of the empirical data of culture-history in a preconceived order of hypothetical stages.

Wundt's 'Elemente der Völkerpsychologie,' we repeat, is an historical construction. That Wundt himself conceives this work as historical is demonstrated by its sub-title, 'Grundlinien einer psychologischen Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit.' But, according to the explicit theoretical foundations, the *raison d'être* of folk-psychology rests on the purely psychological, non-historical nature of its problems. Now an historical subject-matter evidently does not become purely psychological and non-historical, nor does it become 'typical' in Wundt's sense by forcing it into the mould of an hypothetical construction. It is generalized history, and Wundt has in the sub-title named the child by its right name; but by doing that his theoretical foundations of folk-psychology negate themselves. The 'Elemente' prove to be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the science of the folk-soul.

VIII. PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY

The incompatibility of the theoretical foundations of folk-psychology and their actualization—the gap, in short, between the word and the deed—centers about Wundt's failure to apperceive clearly one fundamental problem. This problem,

as I conceive it, is that of the relation of history to psychology. We have already discussed his notion of the 'singular'-historical and the 'typical'-folkpsychological. Wundt does not always give the same connotations to these concepts. One mode of using them has been discussed above. Let us for a moment dwell on a variant form.

Wundt's large work on folk-psychology deals exclusively with what is commonly known as primitive culture, in contradistinction to the culture of documentary history. Wundt motivates the limitation of the scope of his investigations by stating that the early development alone of language, religion, and custom exhibit a *typical* psychogenesis, not yet vitiated by the conscious actions of individuals. These early stages of development are, according to Wundt, common to all peoples, because they are determined by universal psychological motives.¹ In the later stages single individuals become in an increasing degree the determining factors;² then the phenomena are no longer 'typical,' they are 'singular.' The typical phenomena of the early stages present psychological problems, and are therefore the domain of folk-psychology. The phenomena of the later stages, due to their 'singularity,' are non-psychological, and thus pertain to history. Wundt expresses this idea by saying that the field of history begins where that of folk-psychology ends;³ but in his later work, the 'Elemente,' Wundt tacitly ignores altogether this distinction between the earlier and later stages of culture. In his 'Elemente,' as we have seen, he presents a construction of the whole cultural development of mankind, barring the above-said limitation. In fact, the fourth and last stage in this book, called 'die Entwicklung zur Humanität,' is conceived by Wundt as a period which we have by no means completed at the present day.

The distinction Wundt makes in his large work between psychology and history is of dubious scientific value, and is refuted by the contents of his later work. The notion that history applies to phenomena of individual making, in contra-

¹ 'Probl. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 22.

² 'Ethik,' 3d ed., 2, 364.

³ 'Völkerpsychol.' (1st ed.), 1, 1, 25.

distinction to the psychological creations of the folk-soul, is arbitrary and implies a superficial conceptualization of history. The historical phenomena of conscious individual origin are in no way *essentially* distinct from the development of language, religion, and custom. Both groups of phenomena are historical, and both presuppose the psychological setting of culture. This bears directly on the criticism I made on a previous page of Wundt's theory on the relation of the individual to the group. The difference between the individual creations and the phenomena of language, religion, custom is not given objectively in the objects themselves, as would have to be the case if 'history began where folk-psychology ended'; but the difference is rather determined by the angle from which we ourselves view the objects. Let us take an example. Wundt states that the history of literature is the successor of the psychology of language.¹ The former deals with the historical creations of individuals; the latter, with the psychological genesis of the folk-soul. This distinction is plainly unmethodological, because Wundt contrasts and brings into an identical line of development two fields of research that are not comparable on account of the different subjective points of view adopted by the scholar, in spite of the common historical nature of the empirical objects. The psychology of language does not *develop into* the history of literature, as Wundt would have it. It is rather the focus of our interests that shifts.

A similar confusion of the relation of psychology to history is demonstrated by the way in which Wundt delineates the difference between ethnology and folk-psychology. In the relation of these two sciences Wundt rescues the 'purely psychological' (!) nature of folk-psychology by defining ethnology as a genealogy of peoples. Its problems are not psychological. Wundt says, "Die Ethnologie ist eine Wissenschaft von der Entstehung der Völker, ihren Eigenschaften und ihrer Verbreitung über die Erde. . . . Hier können scheinbar kleine Kunsterzeugnisse und ihre Abänderungen in hohem Grade bedeutsam sein für die Feststellung einstiger Wanderungen, Mischungen oder Uebertragungen."² These migrations, mix-

¹ 'Völkerpsychol.' (1st ed.), I, I, 25.

² 'Elem. d. Völkerpsychol.,' 5.

tures, and borrowings associated with the repression of psychology savor suspiciously of Graebnerian diffusionism, which this ethnologist has thought well to formulate as 'the method of ethnology.' It seems probable that this 'Kulturkreislehre' has been fatal to Wundt's conception of ethnology.

Enough has been said, I think, to show that Wundt has failed to bring psychology and history into an harmonious relation with each other. This is proved by the mutual contradictions of the theoretical foundations of folk-psychology, as well as by the gap between these foundations and their actualization. Graebner pretends to solve the problem of the relation of psychology to history by ignoring it. For him psychology does not exist, and history is something that serves as a bait for his 'Kulturkreislehre.' Wundt sees the reality of the problem, and answers it by drawing a sharp line between history and psychology. With this distinction the *raison d'être* of folk-psychology stands and falls. The impossibility of this distinction leads to the self-negation of folk-psychology in Wundt's 'Elemente.'

A criticism of Wundt's folk-psychology and of its theoretical foundations has a deeper bearing than the mere fact of pointing out logical discrepancies. The significant fact is that in the case of Wundt's folk-psychology a most ingenious attempt to mark out clearly a distinction between psychology and history has failed. Wundt has devised a remarkable foundation of concepts upon which to build up a new science of the folk-soul. His concepts of the higher synthesis, the social mind, the reality of folk-psychological actuality, etc., are all seemingly firmly anchored in a monumental philosophical system; but Wundt's conceptual scheme breaks down when applied. His failure is significant, since it proves the inconsistency of drawing a line between history and psychology. That history without psychology is an impossibility is proved by Graebner; that a non-historical psychology of culture, a folk-psychology, is likewise a misconception is proved by Wundt. It would seem to me that history, when taken in its broad sense as the history of culture, is intrinsically associated with a psychological point of view. The relation of psychology to history

is much the same as that of physics to physiology. Historical phenomena are interpreted psychologically as physiological processes are interpreted in terms of physics. The general scepticism that this form of the relation of psychology to history encounters is due, I believe, to two causes; firstly, to the disreputable rôle that popular psychology has played; and, secondly, to the unaccustomed novelty of thinking of history in its broadest possible sense as the history of culture (*Kulturgeschichte*).

What an intrinsic association of psychology and history can attain is well exemplified by numerous individual passages in Wundt's works on folk-psychology, when we abstract from all his theoretical foundations. There we find psychological interpretations of historical phenomena executed with a brilliancy characteristic of Wundt's genius. Such interpretations of Wundt will mark the monumental significance of his work long after folk-psychology as such will have been recognized as an 'Unding.'